

Weaving the Spiral of Knowledge: Implementing Bruner's Framework in Traditional Qur'anic Learning for Young Learners in Al Hikmah gedanganak East Ungaran

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the principles of Jerome Bruner's spiral curriculum in the Qur'an teaching and learning process and examine its role in developing the cognitive and reading ability of the Qur'an in children. The method used is a qualitative approach with a type of phenomenology. with data collection techniques through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation taken at TPQ Al-Hikmah Gedanganak.

The main findings show that the implementation of the spiral curriculum is realized through the preparation of systematic, repetitive, and tiered materials, ranging from basic letter recognition to joint reading. This approach has proven to be effective in answering learning problems in traditional Qur'an institutions that have focused on memorization and technical fluency without a repetition strategy that supports children's cognitive development. With a spiral pattern, material is introduced simply and then repeated again in an increased level of complexity so that the learning process does not stop at mechanical ability, but progresses towards conceptual understanding and internalization of values. These findings are in line with Bruner's three stages of enactive, iconic, and symbolic representations that help students build meaning through the interplay between concrete, visual, and symbolic experiences of reading. In addition, scaffolding support from teachers and interaction between students contribute greatly to increasing motivation, independence, and the effectiveness of gradual learning. This research ultimately confirms that the spiral curriculum is a pedagogical approach that is able to improve traditional learning practices and support the formation of a generation of Qur'anis who understand, appreciate, and are able to practice the values of revelation in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: implementation of spiral curriculum, Qur'an learning, early childhood, qualitative approach

A. Introduction

Traditional Qur'anic educational institutions such as TPQ, madrasah diniyah, and children's tahfizh institutions in general still place memorization and technical reading skills as the main focus of learning. This pattern runs without a series of systematic repetitions to deepen the understanding of meaning and strengthen the internalization of Qur'anic values. These findings are in line with (Amelya Ayu Syaputri et al., 2023) which shows that the curriculum of many TPQ is still stuck in the orientation of fluency in reading so that the dimension of meaning has not developed gradually. (Umardiyah et al., 2025) also emphasized that monotonous learning methods that are not in accordance with the characteristics of child development have an impact on the low formation of Qur'anic moral values. This condition shows that there is a significant gap between the great goal of TPQ to produce the Qur'anic generation and the learning practices that take place, thus encouraging the urgent need to present a more progressive and development-oriented approach to the curriculum.

In line with that, other research also revealed that learning in traditional Qur'anic institutions is still focused on memorization and technical reading skills. (Amelya Ayu Syaputri et al., 2023) again emphasized that many TPQ curricula are not in harmony with the stages of children's cognitive development. (Arsista et al., 2024) It also shows that the absence of a continuous repetition strategy makes students' understanding stagnant on the mechanical aspect. In fact, studies on popular methods such as Iqro' and Tilawati (Amelya Ayu Syaputri et al., 2023) It highlights more the improvement of reading fluency than the deepening of moral meaning and values. On the other hand, the multisensory learning innovations reported by (Umardiyah et al., 2025) It has been proven to improve material retention, but it does not offer a comprehensive and tiered pedagogical framework. This is where the urgency of this research is strengthened—there has been no study that explicitly applies Bruner's spiral curriculum in learning the Qur'an for early childhood. Therefore, the research "Weaving the Spiral of Knowledge: Implementing Bruner's Framework in Traditional Qur'anic Learning for Young Learners" offers a more holistic, repeatable, and gradual learning model according to the development of students.

Jerome S. Bruner emphasized that the core of the learning process is the ability of students to build their knowledge structure gradually through discovery activities, understanding the relationships between concepts, and reorganizing information (Based et al., 2025). Through the idea of the spiral curriculum, Bruner formulated that core concepts need to be introduced early on in a simple form, and then presented again at a later stage with higher complexity. Thus, learning does not stop at memorization, but develops into deep conceptual understanding. (Bruner, 1960) It also emphasizes that learning must be active, meaningful, and in accordance with the child's cognitive development. The author's argument strengthens this view: early childhood students need a repetitive and gradual learning pattern in order to be able to connect reading with the meaning and moral values in it (Juliharti et al., 2023).

In line with this urgency, the application of Bruner's spiral curriculum began to be seen in learning practices at TPQ Al-Hikmah Gedanganak. If it was previously explained that the spiral curriculum emphasizes the repetition of core concepts with gradual depth, this pattern can be seen in the preparation of tiered materials applied by TPQ Al-Hikmah. In the early stages, students are introduced to hijaiyah letters, basic sounds, and simple vocabulary. Then, the material is repeated again at the next level with additional elements of tajweed, understanding the meaning of short verses, and instilling relevant moral values. This practice shows a real transformation from the traditional rote based approach to more meaningful, contextual, and deep comprehension oriented learning as affirmed by Bruner (1960, 1977) in his research (Juliharti et al., 2023). Thus, TPQ Al-Hikmah is a concrete example of adapting the spiral curriculum in traditional Qur'an education, while bridging the needs of children's cognitive development with the aim of sustainable Qur'anic character formation.

This research focuses on three main aspects, namely: The application of the principles of the Bruner spiral curriculum in the preparation and delivery of Qur'an materials for early childhood students, especially how basic concepts are introduced gradually and repeated with increasing levels of complexity.

The scope of this research is limited to the application of the Bruner spiral curriculum in learning the Qur'an at TPQ Al-Hikmah Gedanganak, East Ungaran, with a focus on the process of preparing multi-level materials, systematic repetition strategies, and the application of

children's cognitive development stages in teaching and learning activities. This research involves teachers, early childhood students, and TPQ managers as a source of data through observation, interviews, and documentation of learning practices.

Analyzes how Bruner's spiral curriculum principles are implemented in Qur'an learning for early childhood, specifically related to the gradual repetition of material from simple concepts to more complex levels of understanding.

B. Literature Review

Traditional learning of the Qur'an at institutions such as TPQ generally emphasizes memorization, reading accuracy, and procedural mastery of the material (Amelya Ayu Syaputri et al., 2023). However, contemporary research shows the need for a more constructive approach so that students are actively involved in understanding the meaning and structure of knowledge gradually. Within the framework of Jerome Bruner's theory, the learning process is not only understood as the reception of information, but as an active cognitive activity that allows learners to build their own understanding through exploration, interaction, and discovery (Juliharti et al., 2023). One of Bruner's important concepts is the spiral curriculum, which is the idea that basic material can be taught repeatedly with an increasing level of complexity according to the cognitive development of students. This approach provides space for students to connect previous knowledge with new material, so that learning of the Qur'an does not stop at memorization, but grows into a deeper meaning.

In line with that, Bruner's Discovery Learning framework emphasizes curiosity as the main driver of learning (Based et al., 2025). In the context of learning the Qur'an, this strategy can be applied through activities that direct students to observe, question, reason, and conclude concepts, such as tajweed patterns, verse structure, simple meanings, and the relationship between Qur'anic themes gradually. The implementation of the spiral curriculum in learning the Qur'an at TPQ Al Hikmah Gedanganak shows strong relevance to today's educational needs, because it allows students to learn gradually, dynamically, and holistically. Thus, the spiral approach based on the Bruner framework is believed to be able to increase the activeness, conceptual understanding, and intrinsic motivation of students in learning the Qur'an, especially in the early age group who are developing their cognitive abilities.

C. Research Method

This research is a research **Qualitative** By type **phenomenology**, according to the principle (Sugiono, 2019). Phenomenology emphasizes a deep understanding of the subject's experience in a natural context, thus allowing researchers to capture the perceptions, motivations, and interactions of teachers and students at TPQ Al-Hikmah Gedanganak. Bruner's theory of spiral curriculum and discovery learning is used as a conceptual basis to analyze how a systematic pattern of repetition of material can improve students' cognitive ability, activeness, and understanding of the Qur'an.

The research strategy was carried out by collecting data through field observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation is used to directly review the learning process, methods applied by teachers, interaction between students, and the implementation of spiral curriculum stages. In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers and TPQ managers to explore their experiences, pedagogical considerations, and how they stimulate students' curiosity. Documentation includes activity records, learning recordings, photographs, and material archives, which are used to reinforce empirical data. The strategy is designed to highlight the main problem of traditional Qur'an education, which is the focus on mechanical memorization without repetition that supports conceptual understanding.

The implementation of the research was carried out interactively through three stages of data analysis: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Sugiono, 2019). The data was analyzed to assess how the spiral curriculum was applied from basic letter recognition to continuous reading, as well as how the enactive, iconic, and symbolic stages helped students build meaning. The main findings show that the spiral curriculum is effective in answering traditional learning problems, increasing student independence, motivation, and activity, and supporting the internalization of religious values. The scaffolding support from teachers and interaction between students are important factors in the success of gradual learning, making the spiral curriculum a pedagogical approach that improves traditional learning practices and forms a generation of Qur'anis who understand and live the values of revelation.

D. Discussion

Qur'an learning for early childhood in non-formal educational institutions such as TPQ is often understood as a traditional activity that takes place as is. However, such seemingly simple practices actually retain a complex pedagogical structure. Through a case study approach with in-

depth observation and interviews, this study examines the compatibility between traditional Qur'anic teaching practices and Bruner's theoretical framework. The thematic analysis focused on three main themes: (1) the cascading structure in learning, (2) the increased repetition mechanism, and (3) learning readiness as the basis for leveling up.

The learning structure at TPQ Al-Hikmah shows a very clear step-by-step stage. Beginner students start from the most basic level, namely the introduction of hijaiyah letters, then move on to stringing letters, reading verses until at a later stage they memorize short letters. This hierarchy is a fundamental component of the spiral curriculum, where each level builds the foundation for the next.

Bruner emphasizes that any concept can be taught at any level of development if it is presented in the form of an appropriate representation. The findings of the study show that there is a strong compatibility between these principles and the practice of TPQ Al-Hikmah. Learning starts from the simplest representation (recognition of sounds and shapes), then progresses to symbolic representation (reading letters and word sequences), to integration of meaning at an advanced level (reading verses and memorizing). Research by (Ismail, 2015) and (Olojede, 2020) Affirming that traditional madrassas have culturally used a gradual structure even though it is not formally formulated as a spiral curriculum. The same thing happened at TPQ Al-Hikmah, which builds an intuitive learning level based on the needs of children's development.

The most distinctive feature of the spiral curriculum is the repetition of the core material accompanied by increased complexity. This practice seems to be very dominant in the learning of the Qur'an in Al-Hikmah. Materials such as letters, syllables, and certain tajweed patterns are constantly repeated, but the form of practice is never the same at every stage. In beginners, repetition is performed in the form of phonetic recognition. At the next stage, the repetition of the same letter is used to read simple words, while at a higher level the letters are used in the reading of sentences. Each iteration has a different purpose: retention, understanding, consolidation, and integration. This form of multi-layered repetition is in line with Bruner's principle that learning is stronger when learners interact with the same ideas through more complex cognitive levels as they develop. In other words, students do not just repeat the material, but repeat *The Role of the Material* in a higher learning structure. Studies conducted (Al-Sulami, 2018) The Tahfidz madrassas in Saudi Arabia show that the repetition of memorization accompanied by an increase in context (for example, from

short verses to a series of thematic verses) is a form of spiral reinforcement. This is similar to the learning pattern at Al-Hikmah, where each repetition moves the students towards more holistic skills.

The findings of the study show that the level increase in students is not based on age, but on academic readiness. This readiness is seen from the stability of reading and consistency of material mastery. This principle of readiness is one of the central aspects of Bruner's constructivism, that learning must be adapted to individual development and *scaffolding* must be provided until students are able to continue independently.

In TPQ Al-Hikmah, scaffolding practices are carried out through individual mentoring, re-explanations, giving examples, and additional exercises for students in need. These practices arise naturally and consistently, even without a formal methodological framework. While the faster students are given the added challenge of preventing stagnation, the slower students receive special attention to strengthen their foundation. International research in various Qur'anic education institutions confirms that scaffolding is one of the keys to the success of Qur'anic learning. Study by (Shaheen, 2021) in Pakistan and by (Al-Jarf, 2020) in the United Arab Emirates shows that Qur'anic learning is adaptive, responsive, and highly attentive to individual readiness, thus supporting effective spiral practices.

E. Conclusion

The learning of the Qur'an at TPQ Al-Hikmah Gedanganak has applied the principle of spiral curriculum intuitively and sustainably. A multi-level structure, increased repetition, and the implementation of readiness are the main pillars that are very similar to the Bruner framework. A comparison with global research shows that this phenomenon is common in Qur'anic educational institutions in various Muslim countries, indicating that the concept of spirals also has strong roots in traditional Islamic learning practices. Thus, this study emphasizes that the traditional approach of TPQ has substantial theoretical suitability with the modern educational paradigm. This opens up opportunities for the development of a spiral-based formal curriculum that remains rooted in tradition and integrated with contemporary pedagogical theory.

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